

REMARKS

The present amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action dated October 29, 2002. In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 19, 20, 22 and 24 because of informalities. In addition, claim 15 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Moreover, claims 1, 2, 4, 10, 13 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum in view of Ng. Claims 5 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum and Ng and further in view of Williams. Claims 6, 7, 11 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum and Ng and further in view of Japanese Patent No. 09248755 (JP'766). Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum and Ng and further in view of Kipp. Finally, claims 14 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tatum and Ng and further in view of Stapp.

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 8 and 17-19 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, Applicants have added new claims 25-28, which incorporate the limitations of claims 8 and 17-19 into independent claim 1, with minor changes. Applicants respectfully submit that newly added claims 25-28 are in allowable form.

Moreover, with respect to the objection of claims 19, 20, 22 and 24 because of informalities, Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to each of these claims overcomes the objection thereto. More specifically, claim 19 has been amended to insert --

-- after "means" in line 4. In addition, claim 20 has been amended to remove "process" and replace the same with --method--. Moreover, claim 22, line 9 has been amended to change "scoring" to --scouring--. And claim 24, line 8 has been amended to change "a" to -
-- and to insert --,-- after "means" in line 11.

With respect to the rejection of claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention, claim 15 has been amended to overcome this rejection. Specifically, claim 15 has been amended to delete the term "the" from immediately before "maintenance needs" in line 4 to provide sufficient antecedent basis for this limitation.

With respect to the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the cited prior art, Applicants respectfully submit that the amendment to claim 1 overcomes the rejection thereto. More specifically, Applicants have added the limitation of "providing a communication means associated with a first maintenance station for communicating whether the first maintenance station is available to receive the railcar." Applicants respectfully submit that this limitation was added to claim 1 from claim 19, which was indicated by the Examiner as being allowable over all of the cited prior art. Moreover, other minor amendments were made to more distinctly claim the subject matter of the present invention. Applicants respectfully submit that the newly amended claim 1 is allowable over any and all of the cited prior art, taken singly or in combination.

Claims 2 and 4-20 depend from independent claim 1. These claims are further believed allowable over the references of record for the same reasons as set forth above

with respect to their parent claim since each sets forth additional steps of the Applicants' novel method.

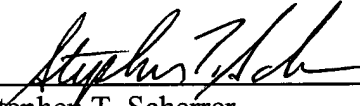
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing remarks and amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims in the application are in allowable form and that the application is now in condition for allowance. If, however, any outstanding issues remain, Applicants respectfully urge the Examiner to telephone Applicants' attorney so that the same may be resolved and the application expedited to issue. Applicants' respectfully request the Examiner to indicate all claims as allowable and to pass the application to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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MARKED UP VERSION TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

providing a communication means associated with a first maintenance station for communicating whether the first maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance [stations] station;

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; and

holding the railcar within a queue area when [a] the at least one maintenance station is not available.

15. (Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

providing an inbound railway;

providing an inspection area connected to the inbound railway;

inspecting the railcar to determine [the] maintenance needs of the railcar;

and

routing the railcar through the maintenance facility based on the maintenance needs.

19. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

providing a communication means at each maintenance station for communicating whether the maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

communicating to an operator via the communication means, the availability of the maintenance stations; and

transferring the railcar to a maintenance station that is available based on the communication of the maintenance stations to the operator.

20. (Amended) The [process] method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

inspecting the railcar for maintenance needs; and

administering a designation to the railcar based on the maintenance needs of the railcar.

22. (Amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the maintenance stations;

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility;

providing an interior blast station for [scoring] scouring an interior of the railcar;

providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area; and

transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is unavailable to receive the railcar.

24. (Amended) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;

providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;

working on the railcar within the maintenance stations; and

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility[;] ;

providing a communication means at each maintenance station for communicating whether the maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

communicating to an operator via the communication means, the availability of the maintenance stations; and

transferring the railcar to a maintenance station that is available based on the communication of the maintenance stations to the operator.

Please add the following new claims:

25. (New) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;
providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;
moving the railcar to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;
working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;
administering a lining to an interior of the railcar within a first maintenance station;
curing the lining within a second maintenance station;
moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; and
holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance station is not available.

26. (New) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:
providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;
providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;
moving the railcar to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;
working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;
providing an interior blast station for scouring an interior of the railcar;
providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is unavailable to receive the railcar;

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; and
holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance station is not available.

27. (New) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:
providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;
providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;
moving the railcar to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;
working on the railcar within the at least one maintenance station;
providing a paint station connected to the transfer area;
providing a cure queue area connected to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to the cure queue area if the paint station is unavailable to receive the railcar;
moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; and
holding the railcar within a queue area when the at least one maintenance station is not available.

28. (New) A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:
providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;
providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;
providing a communication means at each maintenance station for communicating whether each maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;

communicating to an operator via the communication means, the availability of the maintenance stations;

moving the railcar to the transfer area;

transferring the railcar to a first maintenance station that is available based on the communication of each maintenance station to the operator;

working on the railcar within the first maintenance station;

moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility; and

holding the railcar within a queue area when the first maintenance station is not available.

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